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SUBJECT: TFPK01: India Sitrep Oct. 14, 2005

REF: NEW DEHLI 7880

1. The following is the final India sitrep of events related to the October 8 earthquake.

2. Death toll: Contradicting October 13 media reports of 1400 dead, the Press Information Bureau (PIB) of the Government of India (GOI) reports 1178 civilians and 85 Security Forces are dead in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) as of October 13.

3. Injured: As of late October 13, PIB reports 5886 civilians injured and 16 Security Forces missing and presumed injured or dead.

4. Homeless: PIB reports 32,335 buildings destroyed, significantly less than media reports. According to the October 13 "Indian Express," 42,000 houses have been destroyed and 73,450 partially damaged, affecting more than 150,000 people.

5. Indian relief efforts for Pakistan: According to External Affairs Ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna, India sent 82 tons of relief materials by train to Pakistan late October 13. These materials included 5,000 blankets, 370 tents, five tons of plastic sheets and 12 tons of medicine.

6. USAID/OFDA: USAID's OFDA officer, in J&K since October 12, reported that relief efforts have not reached many villages. Organized distribution of relief supplies is a problem; boxes of clothing and supplies were discarded on the road. Travel is slow, military check points are prevalent, and some roads are blocked by debris. Tremors were felt during the nights of October 13 and 14.

7. USAID/New Delhi: Mission Director and Acting Mission Disaster Relief Officer met with J&K Commissioner in Delhi, Parvez Dewan, on October 13. Dewan listed priority relief items, including individual and smaller family sized tents, tarpaulins, locally procured building materials, fortified biscuits, and technical assistance in earthquake resistance construction. Water sanitation is also a concern, though Dewan felt that chlorine tablets and bleach would soon be provided through government channels. Dewan noted J&K has received enough blankets and bottled water; the area's primary need is construction materials, as construction must commence immediately before the coldest winter temperatures hamper the setting of cement. USAID will pursue these requirements with NGO partners and existing Indian programs.

8. Military cooperation in J&K: Pakistani Military officials deny reports that Indian Security Forces on the Line of Control (LoC) helped Pakistani Security Forces rebuild a bunker collapsed in Pakistan-controlled territory on October 13. On October 14, "The Hindu" quoted a Srinagar-based Army officer who reportedly clarified the earlier story, claiming, "Indian soldiers gave the (Pakistani) personnel some implements, with which they dug up earth, looking for survivors. They retrieved some weapons and returned the tools."

9. Indian relief efforts in J&K: PIB on October 13 reported relief operations by the military, Health Ministry and civil authorities have been streamlined at the Srinagar airport to reach the most badly affected areas of Baramulla, Poonch, Kupwara and Srinagar. The military reports the rescue of 556 people and delivery of 468 tons of supplies by 402 sorties flown by 12 helicopters and 32 aircraft

10. International aid and NGOs: The International Committee for the Red Cross announced October 14 it was providing 50,000 blankets, 10,000 kitchen sets and 500 tents to the J&K branch of the Indian Red Cross Society. According to a BBC report of October 14, Indian representatives of Oxfam and the International Federation for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have noted unsolicited donations for the J&K earthquake fall much below the immediate response to the December 26, 2004 Asian tsunami and the Gujarat earthquake of 2000.

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11. Terrorism: An AFP media report of October 14 indicates a female suicide bomber struck a major highway connecting Srinagar and Jammu moments before an army convoy passed; she may have been transporting explosives and

ignited accidentally, or wired to ignite herself. AFP also reported Indian troops killed five more terrorists in gun battles in Poonch on October 13.

112. Politics: Reuters (October 14) quoted Yasin Malik, head of the separatist Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, who contended the GOI had missed a "golden opportunity" to show its human face, and alleged most aid effort in J&K is homegrown. Moulvi Abbas Anasari of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) told Poloff, "You (U.S.) are doing so much for Pakistan, why not this side? No one has gone beyond Uri and Tangdhar. You can do this through Red Cross/UNHCR."

113. Infrastructure: In a telephone conversation with Political Specialist, APHC Chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq stated the magnitude of the disaster is so great professionals must handle relief work with the GOI's help. Moulvi Abbas Anasari of APHC requested the USG encourage India and Pakistan to reopen telephone connections that would allow those affected to speak to relatives on opposite sides of the Line of Control (LoC). According to NDTV (October 14), 54 Indians were across the LoC when the earthquake struck October 8; of those, 7 have returned home via the Wagah-Attari border.

BLAKE